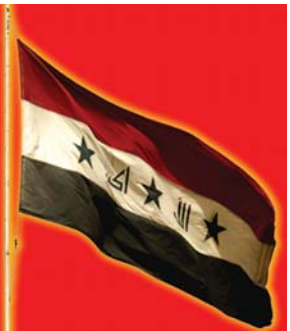




THIS WEEK IN IRAQ



Vol. 2, No. 1

January 4, 2006

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U.S. Army photo by Spc. Teddy Wade

An Iraqi senior citizen shows his index finger after voting in east Baghdad on Dec. 15. Iraqi citizens elected their first permanent parliamentary government.

This Year in Iraq:

**A look back on the most historic year
in the country's history**

Story by Rick Rzepka
This Week in Iraq, Assistant Editor

During the past year, Iraq has undergone tremendous transitions and has crystallized as a bona fide democracy.

At this time last year, Iraq was gearing up for their first democratic elections ever. More than 8 million Iraqis participated in the democratic process to elect a transitional government.

Army Command Sgt. Maj. William J. Gainey, senior enlisted advisor to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, began 2005 in Iraq as the senior enlisted advisor for Multi-National Corps - Iraq. He witnessed the Jan. 30 elections and said the event and subsequent elections in Iraq and Afghanistan are significant on many

levels.

"I think elections are the key focus," Gainey said. "When you can go into an area that a week before people were shooting at you, and now you go out and see people lined up as far as your eyes can see ... voting and giving you 'the finger' -- the purple index finger -- it was amazing."

Another pivotal event in Iraq's breakthrough year came Oct. 15, as Iraqis again embraced the power of the vote to ratify a constitution.

"By casting their ballots the Iraqi people dealt a severe blow to the terrorists and are sending a clear message to the world," said President George W. Bush about the vote.

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Gen. Casey's Corner

The beginning of a new year is a time to reflect on the past and look toward the future.

Last year was a monumental year. The year began with the successful election of a transitional government, the Iraqi people wrote and ratified a constitution and recently held another successful election.

Along the way, more than 15 million Iraqis registered to vote and an

increasing number voted in each event, due in part to an increasingly secure environment. A key to the improved security environment was the growth and capability of Iraqi police and army combat battalions.

The Iraqi Security Forces grew from a handful to 128 operational battalions in

2005 - 74 fighting side-by-side with Coalition Forces and 54 taking the lead in the fight against the insurgents. This, coupled with successful operations to deny terrorists safe havens across the Syrian border and throughout the Euphrates River Valley, have made life more difficult for the terrorists and better for the average Iraqi.

Improvements in these key areas led to the U.S. decision to not deploy two brigades, or approximately 7,000 Soldiers, to replace

By Gen. George W. Casey
Multi-National Force - Iraq
Commanding General



The Iraqi Security Forces grew from a handful to 128 operational battalions in 2005 - 74 fighting side-by-side with Coalition Forces.

brigades already in theater.

Ultimately this will lead to a reduction of U.S. forces in theater to approximately 130,000, down from the current base of 138,000.

While Syria and Iran are encouraged to abandon their unhelpful policies toward Iraq, focused operations against terrorists will continue in 2006 and advancement along several avenues improbable in 2005 will progress.

Soon, Iraqis will seat their parliament. Results are still pending, but it is envisioned that the new governing body will be more representative of the people.

Once the election results are known, the hard work of seating the government and building the institutions that run the country, such as the Ministries of Defense, Interior and Finance will begin.

A focus on capacity-building programs in ministries and at the provincial level this year, with the goal of enabling the Iraqi government at national and local levels to deliver basic services to the Iraqi people, will allow Iraqis to take the lead in many areas in 2006.

Logistics school yields new crop of Iraqi leaders

Story by Master Sgt. Ryan Mosier
MNSTC-I Public Affairs

TAJI — Nearly 600 newly trained Iraqi Army leaders in the fields of support and logistics are now taking these critical skills to the front lines, and the institution that trained them is continuing to expand for the future.

Students taking part in supervisor-level courses in logistics, transport, maintenance, supply, administration and medical fields were awarded their certificates Dec. 19 as part of the largest graduation yet of the Iraqi Army Service and Support Institute at Taji Military Training Base.

"I had been in the old Army for 25 years," said Iraqi Warrant Officer Adna, a student in the maintenance supervisor's course. "This is the first time I see how they (Iraqi instructors) deal with us in a professional way."

The institute has trained more than 3,000 leaders since its first course started in March and more than 6,000 additional students are planned to receive training within the next six months.

"The logistics field is very important for any army in the world and all the lessons from history give us proof of this importance," said Iraqi Col. Warid, commander of the institute.

Iraqi instructors and staff have developed the institute's courses and procedures, with continued mentorship from Coalition advisors. The goal is for all courses to be taught by Iraqis by June 2006 with operational control of the institute handed over by August.

Australian Army Maj. Ted Leeson, the Coalition Military Assistance Transition Team project manager for the institute, said the initial plan was to graduate 330 students per month and this will now reach more than 1,100 per month by early 2006.

"An absolutely fantastic team effort by all involved," he said.

The success of the programs developed and taught at the institute poses a new problem - growing pains.

The site at Taji, which was always planned as a temporary facility, is being outgrown as new courses, instructors and students pass through its doors. This has led the institute to branch out to another campus at Taji that can train and house more students.

MNF-I Commanding General
Gen. George W. Casey Jr.

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The Iraqi color bearers stand ready as a crowd gathers before the transfer of authority of Iraqi battlespace to 3rd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division, Iraqi Army.



Above: Mattan, a son of an Iraqi Soldier, waits to present his bouquet to Maj. Gen. David Rodriguez, Task Force Freedom commander, during the transfer of authority of Iraqi battlespace to 3rd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division, Iraqi Army in Makhmur Dec. 27.

Right: An Iraqi color guard member watches as the audience gathers before the transfer of authority ceremony.



An Iraqi Army military band plays the Iraqi National Anthem during the transfer of authority ceremony in Makhmur.

Iraqi Army takes security in northern Iraq towns

Story and photos by Sgt. Rachel Brune
101st Sustainment Brigade, Public Affairs Office

MAKHMUR — Against the backdrop of the second-largest granary in Iraq, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division Iraqi Army took over Makhmur from coalition forces in a transfer of authority ceremony Dec. 27.

Under the command of Lt. Col. Hogar Salahaddin Abdul, the battalion is now responsible for the stability and security of a large swathe of the Tigris River Valley.

During the months leading to the transfer, the battalion conducted combined operations with Iraqi Police and units from Task

Force Thunder, such as Battery C, 4th Battalion, 11th Field Artillery Regiment.

Lt. Col. Jemiel Dildar Dosky, battalion executive officer, served as master of ceremonies for the event. After welcoming the distinguished guests, including Duraid Kashmoula, governor of Nineveh Province, Maj. Gen. Jamal, division commander, and Maj. Gen. David M. Rodriguez, Task Force Freedom commander, he paused for a moment of silence “for fallen comrades.”

“This is truly a superb Iraqi Army battalion,” said Lt. Col. Scott Wuestner, 4/11th Field Artillery commander. “[Hogar] truly wants to serve his country.”



2005

from page 1

The constitution also provided for an advancement in equal rights. The Iraqi constitution gives women equal rights and a mandatory 25 percent of all seats in the newly elected parliament, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told Tim Russert on NBC News' Meet the Press. "The Iraqis are now going to engage in a process which gives them a real chance for a broadly representative government," she said.

The chance for the new representative government materialized on Dec. 15, when the Iraqis again dipped their fingers in the ink and elected a permanent governing body. More than 70 percent of eligible Iraqi voters, 11 million, participated in the parliamentary elections which spurred a minimal amount of violence and a resounding feeling of unity throughout the country.

"They've taken their sovereignty," said Gen. George W. Casey, Commanding General, Multi-National Force - Iraq. "They've brought in an interim government, elected a transitional government, peacefully passed power, written a constitution, approved the constitution, built an army of over -- an army and police forces of over 200,000, got them into the fight,

and yesterday they elected an assembly that will form a government to lead them for the next four years -- all of this against a ruthless and resilient insurgency. So a remarkable effort here in less than three years, and every man and woman who has served here or fought here owns a piece of this success, and particularly the loved ones of our fallen comrades," Casey said after the elections.

This year has seen a number of successes as a result of ongoing operations and cooperation with the Iraqi Army and security forces here.

Every man and woman who has served here or fought here owns a piece of this success.

Gen. George W. Casey,
Commanding General, MNF-I

In March, the 5th Iraqi Army Division conducted its first mission in the Wasit province. The operations neutralized terrorism through establishing traffic control points, mounted reconnaissance patrols and gathering intelligence from local citizens.

Also, all 27 battalions of the Iraqi Army's nine brigades became operational with the March 20 graduation of nearly 1,500 Soldiers at Kirkush Military Training base.

In May of 2005, control of the An-Numaniyah Iraqi Army base was transferred from Coalition forces to the Ministry of Defense. The MOD took responsibility for the base's infrastructure, life support functions and maintenance.



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Michael McMaugh
During Operation Steel Curtain, Marine Lance Cpl. Scott Larkin checks a house in Karabilah on Nov. 10, to ensure that the ordnance inside. Coalition and Iraqi forces ran several operations through the insurgent-heavy al Anbar region prior to Iraq's parliamentary elections.

The base is now home to a fully operational Iraqi Army brigade and training center.

In June, an Iraq led effort called Operation Lightning brought a 38 percent reduction in the number of detonated vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and a 23 percent increase in the number of VBIEDs discovered before detonating. Operation Lightning was carried out by seven IA battalions, nine Iraqi Special Police battalions and Coalition Forces. This operation was also credited with a 10 percent reduction in IED explosions and 18 percent fewer attacks against Iraqi and Coalition forces throughout Baghdad.

In preparation for December's election, Operation Steel Curtain prevented foreign terrorists from entering Iraq in November. On Nov. 30, the Iraqi flag was raised in Husaybah, symbolizing the success of the operation in the Al-Anbar province.

Iraq has made an evolutionary leap in 2005 thanks to the ongoing efforts of Coalition forces and the successful development of the Iraqi Armed Forces, Coalition leaders have said. With the support of the Iraqi people, a new Iraq is rising from the ashes to become a legitimate player on the world stage.



U.S. Marine Corps photo by Chief Warrant Officer Craig J. Shell
Iraq Army Soldiers of the 7th Division conduct marksmanship training with AK-47 assault rifles on Camp Fallujah on Oct. 14.



Heroes of the Week

Fallujah watchman likes progress



Story and photo by Norris Jones

U.S. Army Corps. of Engineers, Central District Public Affairs

FALLUJAH — A lifetime resident of Fallujah is very optimistic about his hometown's future.

Jabar Ibrahim Farhan Deab was born here 54 years ago and is the night watchman at the Al Tahadi Water Treatment Facility. Construction on that plant is nearly complete and, once finished, it will produce more than 400 cubic meters of potable water per hour, increasing Fallujah's drinking water capacity about 15 percent. Both Ibrahim and his son's family (including eight grandchildren) reside there.

"Last year Fallujah looked like a demolition zone," Ibrahim said. "This year there's a lot of construction going on and I can see improvements everywhere. We now have clean running water and they're getting the electricity restored. There's a lot happening and it's very beautiful in Fallujah."

Both Ibrahim and his son, who also is a guard at Al Tahadi, said when they were forced out of the city last year and then returned, their home was totally destroyed.

"There was nothing left," he said

Both are looking to better times. Ibrahim hopes now that there is a free Iraq.

"I pray for peace, stability where we don't have to worry about threats, and a better life for my grandchildren," he said.

Jabar Ibrahim Farhan Deab shows the official paperwork naming him a security guard at the Al Tahadi Water Treatment Facility along the Euphrates River in Fallujah. He says he hopes for a brighter life for his 12 grandchildren.

Mortar attack doesn't deter Balad airman

Story by Maj. Robert Couse-Baker

332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, Public Affairs Office

BALAD AIR BASE — Staff Sgt. Amer Kawasmi's fourth trip to Iraq would not be so noteworthy if it were not for how abruptly his third rotation ended.

At about 3 a.m. July 28, while walking back to his room in the housing complex, a mortar exploded less than two meters from him.

Paramedics and co-workers administered first aid and Kawasmi was rushed to the Air Force Theater Hospital for surgery to remove shrapnel.

Later that afternoon Brig. Gen. Frank Gorenc, 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing commander, presented a Purple Heart to Kawasmi while the 28-year-old avionics specialist was awaiting aeromedical evacuation to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Germany.

After returning to duty with the 57th Wing at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Kawasmi asked to redeploy on the next rotation to Balad.

As the noncommissioned officer in charge of the 46th Aircraft Maintenance Unit specialist flight, Kawasmi is once again keeping the MQ-1 Predator

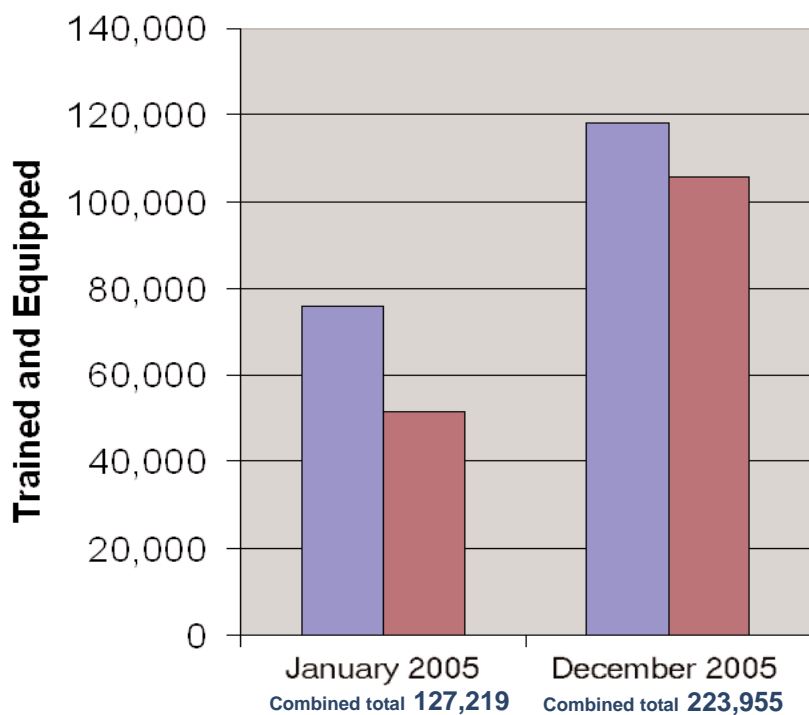
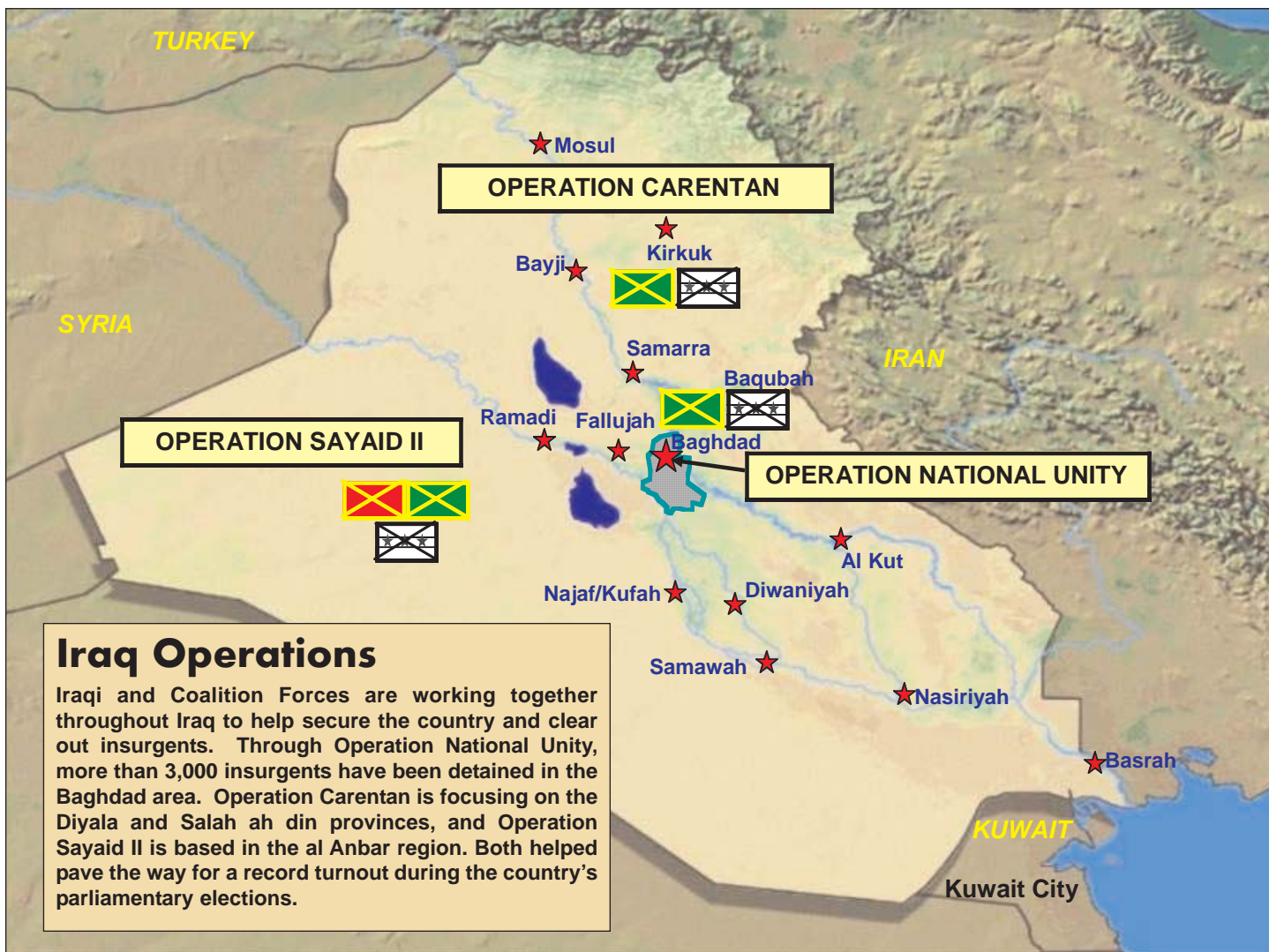
unmanned aerial vehicles in the sky.

"It feels good to be back. This is where the mission takes place," he said.

Originally from Arlington, Texas, the soft spoken Airman had to reassure his dad back home about volunteering for another rotation.

"This is what I want to do," Kawasmi told his family.

Despite the risks, he said working in the deployed environment is the best part of the job. With 10 years experience, Kawasmi believes the Air Force is his career and hopes for many more opportunities to deploy.



Growing presence

The number of trained and equipped Iraqi Forces increased by more than 76 percent from the January elections to the December elections, with more expected in 2006.

Iraqi Security Forces

- Ministry of Interior Forces (Iraqi Police Force)
- Ministry of Defense Forces (Iraqi Army)



New Karadah water network

Photos by Norris Jones

U.S. Army Corps. of Engineers, Central District Public Affairs Office

Crews have begun to install 6.2 miles of pipe for a water network in Karadah, eastern Baghdad. Work got underway Oct. 18 and is expected to finish Feb. 1. About 12 Iraqis are on the crew and the project is 50 percent complete. So far, almost 2.5 miles of pipe has been installed. The \$763,000 project, awarded to Ghadak Co. Ltd., will help about 8,000 residents.



BAGHDAD — The Central Criminal Court of Iraq held 10 trials last week, convicting seven security detainees for illegal weapons possession.

Upon conviction, all defendants are turned over to the Iraqi Corrections Service to serve their sentences.

To date, the CCCI has held 843 trials of those suspected of anti-Iraqi and anti-Coalition activities threatening the security of Iraq and targeting MNF-I. These proceedings have resulted in 749 convictions with sentences of up to 30 years imprisonment.



Coalition, Iraqi Security Forces' Operations Review



Story by Julie Nicolov

Multi-National Corps - Iraq, Public Affairs Office

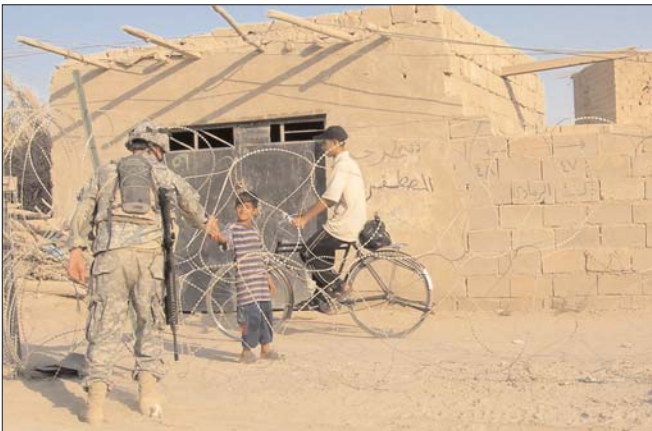
This week in Iraq, Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces detained 275 anti-Iraq forces, found and cleared 153 improvised explosive devices and 137 weapons caches while carrying out nearly 200 combined operations.

As a vital part of those operations, Iraqi Security Forces are providing security for their country in some of the most dangerous parts of Iraq.

In western Ramadi, Iraqi Army Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 7th Division working alongside of 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 28th Infantry Division, are clearing the streets of known insurgents.

On Dec. 27 and 28, Soldiers detained five targeted insurgents, including Jassim Mohammed Fayadh, a high-value insurgent leader, allegedly responsible for financing terrorism in the Tammim neighborhood and known to have supplied arms and munitions to al-Qaida in Iraq.

"Our battalion has been working in western Ramadi with the Coalition Forces for the last eight months," said Lt. Col. Mustafa, commanding officer, 1/1/7 IA. "During that time, we have fought and captured many insurgents. Yesterday was a big step to bringing safety and security to this area for our local citizens and their families. We will continue to work with our coalition partners to bring security to western Ramadi."



U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Julie Nicolov

A Soldier greets two boys near a checkpoint in Ramadi on Dec. 28.



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Timothy Kingston

A plume of smoke surrounds a U.S. Army UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter as Soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division conduct an aerial assessment of an oil pipeline fire outside Forward Operating Base McHenry on Dec. 27.

In Tal Afar, Iraqi police have a new facility from which to provide security for local citizens.

Police Chief Gen. Fawaz Mahmoud Issa officially opened the new Al Salam Police Station in a ceremony on Dec. 28.

The event marked a milestone for Tal Afar's police department as part of efforts to restore the city's quality of life and security. Last year, terrorists destroyed a police station in Tal Afar, but the opening of the new station represents a resurrection of the police force, according to city officials.

"We're very thankful to the Coalition Forces for their support in building this police station," said Tal Afar Mayor's Assistant Gen. Sabah Hamidi Mohammed. "We also want to thank the military police for their training of our police officers and police force."

In northern Iraq, Iraqi Security Forces along with Multi-National Forces from Task Force Freedom detained 109 suspected terrorists and seized four weapons caches, Dec. 17-29.

Iraqi Army Soldiers were involved in two of the three largest operations.

IA Soldiers from 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 2nd Division detained 13 individuals suspected of terrorism during separate raids in Mosul on Dec. 20-29.

In Tikrit, Iraqi Police and Army units rescued the brother of a Salah Ad Din Provincial Council member and arrested three suspects after a failed kidnapping attempt in Tikrit on Dec. 29.

Police chased the kidnappers from Tikrit to the village of al Alam, about 10 miles east of the city, before the suspects abandoned their vehicle and dragged their victim into a nearby house. As the officers approached the building, the kidnappers opened fire on them. The police secured the area around the house and called for support from a 1st Brigade, 4th Iraqi Army Division unit stationed nearby.

The Iraqi troopers, augmented by U.S. Soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, entered the house and quickly subdued the suspects.

Coalition Soldiers continue to do their part to quell the insurgency.

In Kirkuk, Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, detained 11 individuals suspected of terrorism and discov-

See OPERATIONS, next page

U.S., Iraqi helicopter crews meet

Story by Spc. Lee Elder
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

TIKRIT — The 101st Combat Aviation Brigade hosted members of the fledgling Iraqi Air Force's 3rd Squadron on Dec. 21. The objective was to share information and see each unit's aircraft.

The meeting is the beginning of a partnership between the two units and is part of efforts to help the Iraqi Air Force become self-sustaining. The 14 Iraqi squadron members also were briefed on the brigade's intelligence and operational capabilities and then got a first-hand look at its aircraft.

"We both may learn from each other and share our common experiences to help build a more secure Iraq," said Col. Warren E. Phipps, 101st Aviation Combat Brigade commander. "We can leverage both the capabilities of my brigade and the 3rd Air Force Squadron to assist in the security of the critical infrastructure of northern Iraq."

The mission shared by both units is protecting the pipeline in northern Iraq that brings oil to Turkey and ensuring that electrical power systems are not destroyed by insurgents and other criminal elements.

The partnership between the two units is a good fit, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Dave Schlesinger said. He is head of the Coalition Advisor Support Team in Kirkuk that assists the Iraqi Air Force's rebuild effort in that area.

"Since we share the airspace, one of the biggest benefits is to learn where the 101st is flying," Schlesinger said. "It works out well since we're doing the same mission, protecting the infrastructure of the country."

The Iraqi Airmen were shown the brigade's areas of concentra-



U.S. Army photo by Ryan Matson

Capt. Richard Feltzer, 6th Bn., 101st Combat Avn. Bde., shows a group of Iraqi Air Force pilots, mechanics and crewmembers some of the features on a CH-47D Chinook helicopter during their meeting on Dec. 21 at Forward Operating Base Speicher.

tion. Besides providing logistical support and air cover, aircraft are constantly monitoring key areas watching for insurgent or criminal activity.

Phipps said he keeps in close contact with commanders on the ground to ensure the brigade's fleet of more than 150 helicopters is maximizing its support for ground forces.

Operations

from previous page

ered a weapons cache consisting of 180 mortar rounds, a functional machinegun, and artillery fuses during separate operations on Dec. 27.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment detained 25 individuals suspected of terrorism in Mosul on Dec. 19-28.

Three weapons caches were discovered and destroyed by Iraqi and U.S. Soldiers Dec. 27 in north central Iraq.

Near Tikrit, Soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team discovered a large cache of mortar rounds and artillery fuses while patrolling near Hawijah on Dec. 27.

Nearly 400 mortar rounds of various types and sizes, along with 250 pounds of explosive propellant, 878 artillery fuses, 1,900 rounds of small arms ammunition, a Russian-made anti-tank missile and an anti-

personnel mine were blown up by an explosive ordnance disposal team at the site. Two other caches were discovered near Bayji.

Task Force Band of Brothers Soldiers also disrupted two terrorist bombing operations on Dec. 27 in Baqubah, a city about 20 miles north of Baghdad. The first incident occurred just before noon, when Soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team stopped a suspicious car and detained the driver after discovering the vehicle was being prepared as a vehicle-borne IED.

Several hours later, a second vehicle tried to run through the checkpoint and was fired at by the Soldiers. The driver was killed in the initial burst of fire and the vehicle came to a quick stop. Two men with AK-47 assault rifles climbed out and fled the scene.

One of the gunmen escaped and the other was captured.

MNF-I Operations

Summary: Dec. 24 to Dec. 30



Courtesy photo

**Combined operations: 191
IEDs found and cleared: 153
anti-Iraqi forces detained: 275
foreign fighters captured
or killed: 9
Weapons caches found
and cleared: 137**

A year after the battle, Fallujah is rebounding

Story by Cpl. Heidi E. Laredo
2nd Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)

FALLUJAH — Little more than one year ago, the Iraqi people faced a fierce insurgency in Fallujah, and the Marines were called in to correct it.

The battle, which caused its population to be displaced, also caused damage to the city's infrastructure.

Now, Marines and Coalition Forces assist in rebuilding the city.

Before the fight to clear the insurgents, Fallujah had about 300,000 people, said John K. Weston, a U.S. State Department spokesman. By the time the attack was launched, the vast majority of the population left the area.

Operation Al Fajr was, a joint offensive to clear terrorists out of Fallujah.

Marines moved through Fallujah's streets and killed or captured the insurgents. As a result of the fighting, the city suffered extensive infrastructure damage in some areas.

"The economic challenges are going to be the areas in the industrial section of the city where a lot of the bad guys were operating from," said Weston. "They had a lot of bombs dropped on it. That right there is where 68 percent of the jobs were based,

and that's the big focus for us and them. There's been more damage in Fallujah, probably than any other city in Iraq."

Residents were allowed to return in mid-December 2004. However, more than 150,000 Fallujans have yet to return to the city.

"One of the biggest things that stands out in my mind was when I was out here during Operation [Al Fajr]," said Lance Cpl. Anthony Hager, who deployed in 2004 with Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, under 1st Marine Division. "I was in the [Civil Military Operation Center] and there was a big firefight in the mosque across the street. During my first convoy, when

I came back out here in July this year, I saw that mosque was rebuilt. They put bricks up where tanks passed through and where bullet holes riddled the walls. That was the first sign where I felt that what we do does make a difference."

One year after Operation Al Fajr was complete, Fallujah continues to rebuild. A mosque across the street from a forward post in the city has been repaired.

U.S. Marine Corps. photo by Lance Cpl. Josh Cox



U.S. Marine Corps. photo by Lance Cpl. Josh Cox

In the aftermath of Operation Al Fajr in Fallujah, Marines and Coalition Forces continue to assist in securing the city from terrorists.



Two men paint a gate in Fallujah on Dec. 15. Residents in the city have been making needed repairs in the last year since Operation Al Fajr ended.

U.S. Marine Corps. photo by Staff Sgt. Ronna M. Weyland

Rebuilding Iraq

Projects that are shaping a nation

ZAKHO - A new armory, gym and rappelling tower has been built at the Zakho Military Academy in the Dahuk Province. The Academy trains more than 10,000 Iraqi military students.



More than 12,600 people in a rural area of the Ninewa Province have a more reliable source of water with the installation of 14 wells.



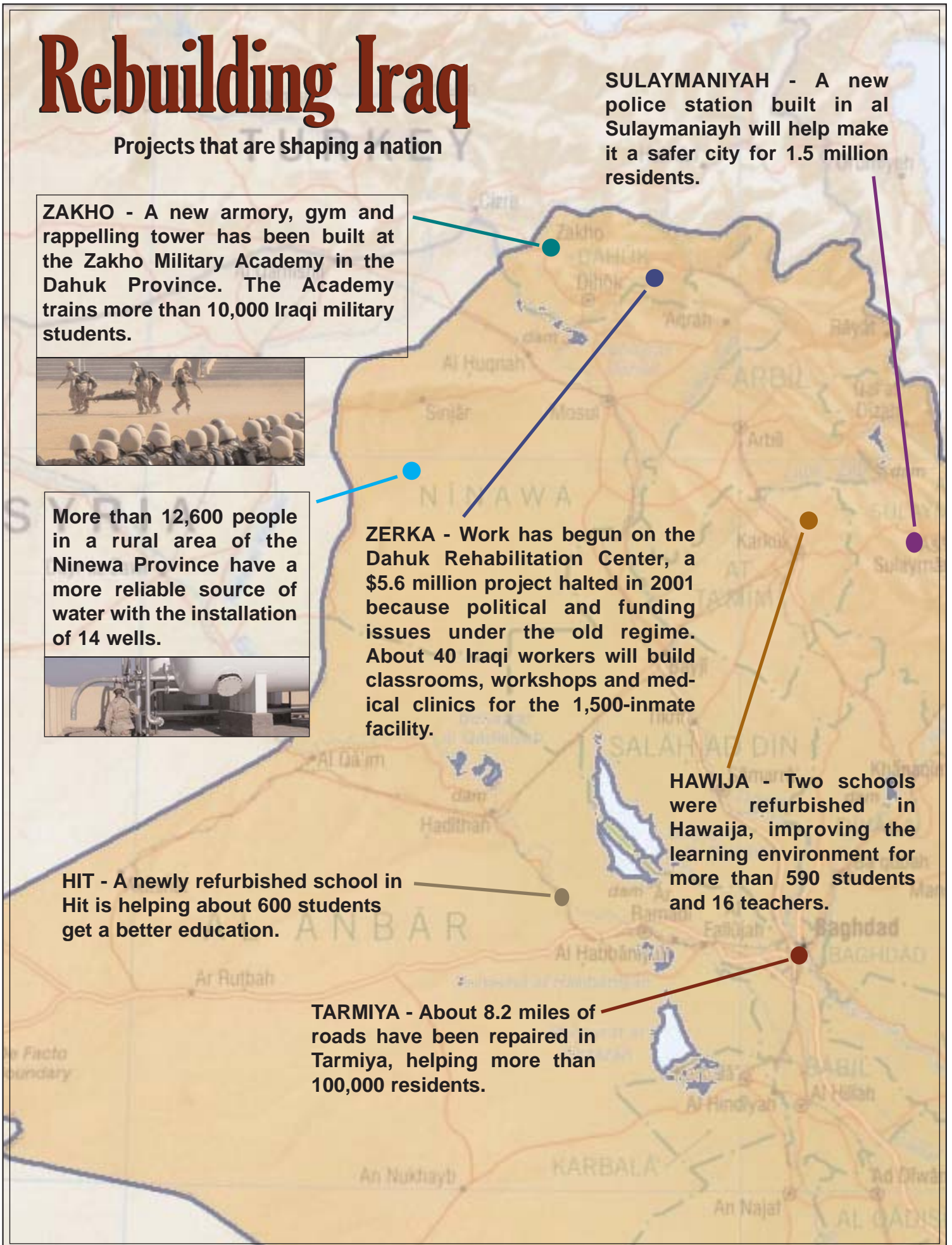
HIT - A newly refurbished school in Hit is helping about 600 students get a better education.

TARMIYA - About 8.2 miles of roads have been repaired in Tarmiya, helping more than 100,000 residents.

SULAYMANIYAH - A new police station built in al Sulaymaniayh will help make it a safer city for 1.5 million residents.

ZERKA - Work has begun on the Dahuk Rehabilitation Center, a \$5.6 million project halted in 2001 because political and funding issues under the old regime. About 40 Iraqi workers will build classrooms, workshops and medical clinics for the 1,500-inmate facility.

HAWIJA - Two schools were refurbished in Hawaija, improving the learning environment for more than 590 students and 16 teachers.



The Protectors of Iraq

**Iraqi Forces at the center
of the fight for a nation**

Photos can be found on www.mnf-iraq.com

An Iraqi Army Soldier climbs stairs to secure a roof while U.S. Marines with Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, secure the rest of the house in Hadith on Dec. 21.

U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Michael R. McMaugh



U.S. Army photo by Spc. Clydell Kinchen

Iraqi Soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Iraqi Army Division - "The Gara" - stand in formation for the change of responsibility on Dec. 27 in Makhmur.



U.S. Marine Corps photo by
Cpl. Michael R. McMaugh

Iraqi Army Soldiers and U.S. Marines with Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, search a courtyard for any hidden weapons and ammunition caches in Haditha on Dec. 21.



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Francisco V. Govea II

Najaf police academy graduates conduct a mock raid during their graduation ceremony in An Najaf. The graduates are preparing to protect their own people.